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C O R R E C T E D COPY (SUBJECT)

DEPT FOR AFGHAN ELECTIONS TASK FORCE

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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: Afghan Elections Situation Report Four - 0800 Local,
August 20, 2009

11. (SBU) The next sitrep is scheduled for 1200 local on August 20.

Security

12. Post heard from General Amiri of the Afghan National Police, who clarified earlier reports of an alleged ban on all weapons in Kabul. The General said the order only applied to carrying weapons at the polling sites, and did not apply to protective details for international observers. Post has received no reports of any observers being barred from entry to polling sites for having armed escorts, or for any other reason. The European Union observer mission's 86-member team has reported no abnormalities at any of the sites it is currently observing.

Provincial reports by region follow:

Regional Command (RC) - North: No update from sitrep three.

RC South: No update from sitrep three.

RC-East:

Ghazni - There are multiple reports of violence in the province on the morning of August 20. OCC-P also reported five rockets were launched in Khogyani district around 0530 hours local time, three of which landed near the District Center. There is no further information on this incident available at this time. At 0650 hours local time, OCC-P reported a single rocket strike destroyed a shop in Ghazni City with no injuries or deaths. The ANP is already on scene. At 0705 hours local time, OCC-P reported a single rocket hit behind FOB Vulcan with no injuries or deaths. OCC-P reported an attack on Rashidan District Center at 0730 hours local time. OCC-P has requested air support from Task Force White Eagle. At 0740 OCC-P reported that a joint ANA-ANP convoy carrying election materials was attacked by AAF in Warra village in Gelan district. We await further information.

Insurgents attacked a polling site with small arms fire in Nangarhar/Khogyani. No casualties or damage reported.

Insurgents attacked a polling site with small arms fire in Khowst/Mando Zayi. No damage or casualties reported.

Insurgents attacked a polling site with small arms fire in Khowst/Tani. No casualties or damage reported.

Insurgents attacked a polling site with small arms fire in Paktia/Jaji. No further information was immediately available.

Insurgents attacked a polling site with small arms fire and rocket propelled grenades in Nangarhar/Bati. No further information was immediately available.

Insurgents attacked a polling station with small arms fire in Laghman/Alishing. No further information was immediately available.

Insurgents attacked a polling site with small arms fire in Lowgar/Baraki Barak. No casualties or damage reported.

Insurgents attacked a polling station with small arms fire in Kunar/Ghaziabad. No further information was immediately available.

Insurgents attacked a school/polling center with an IED in Kabul/Kabul. No casualties or damage reported.

RC-West: No update from sitrep three.

Voting & Counting Activities

¶3. (U) According to Embassy observer teams and news reports, polling sites have opened as scheduled across the country, with no current reports of any sites not opening as planned.

¶4. (U) Ghazni IEC has delivered the supplemental election materials for Jaghato district for air delivery, including 50 ballot boxes, 25 polling kits, 25 screens. The materials were unloaded and stored for possible air delivery if helo support can be obtained.

¶5. (U) Post has received reports that holepunches at polling stations 182 and 183 (located in Kabul) have malfunctioned. Due to the malfunctions, four of six polling stations at site 183 have stopped functioning pending repair of the punches. Observers report growing lines as the IEC officers await a solution.

Voter Turnout

¶6. (SBU) Polling has begun, with President Karzai and Independent Election Commission Chairman Ludin having been televised casting their votes on local and international television.

Fraud

¶7. (SBU) No updates from sitrep two.

Atmospherics

¶8. (SBU) Paktika OCC-P reports robust voter turnout in Sharana, leading ANP to request additional ANSF support to handle the large crowds. PEO Taj Ali reports all polling sites in Paktika opened as scheduled this morning and that there is "good turnout" throughout the province. He confirmed OCC-P's report of large voter turnout in Sharana, and said that there has been no attack or threat perpetuated against the province's polling sites overnight or this morning.

Pam Constable of the Washington Post called to report a 1 AM US SF/ Afghan raid on the Park Palace hotel, where several male journalists' rooms were searched and a Japanese journalist was reportedly taken away. The Public Affairs Section will follow up with the Japanese embassy.

Public Affairs

19. AFGHAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS:

VOA reported on comments by the State Department spokesman in which he said that the Taliban campaign to disrupt Afghan elections will fail.

RTA and Ariana TV reported on an announcement by the MOI that carrying of weapons in Kabul would be banned on Election Day. According to the report, anyone caught carrying a weapon will be arrested, their weapons confiscated and their license revoked; only security personnel and institutions would be excepted. VOA reported that a poll by The Washington Post shows that most Americans think that war in Afghanistan is not worth fighting.

Tolo TV reported that UNAMA expressed concern over mounting problems with the 20 August elections in Afghanistan. The UN special envoy to Afghanistan also reportedly expressed concern over lack of security and fears of limited participation in the elections by women.

Many media outlets reported that U.S. Senator John McCain, on a visit to Afghanistan, said the United States and the international community will be successful in the war on terror in Afghanistan, and the Taliban will lose. He reportedly said the U.S. does not support any particular presidential candidate in the 20 August elections, and called for an upsurge in Afghan security forces.

Radio Arman reported that U.S. President Barack Obama recently stressed the importance of security for the Afghan elections, saying that U.S. forces will try to ensure security at the polling stations so that people can vote. The U.S. says the elections should be legitimate and they will cooperate with the new Afghan president.

Numerous Afghan media outlets reported that militants attacked a vehicle carrying election officials and electoral materials to a polling station in the eastern province of Nuristan on Wednesday, injuring three workers and setting afire the materials. The Deputy Police Chief of Nuristan, Colonel Mohammad Farooq Badr, said the militants intercepted the vehicle in the Mandol district. Governor Jamaluddin Badr said the workers did not inform police prior to transferring the materials. He added the wounded officials have been shifted to a facility of the Provincial Reconstruction Team. IEC

provincial chief Omar Sami confirmed the incident, and warned that if the security personnel do not shift electoral materials immediately to the district, people will be deprived of their right to vote. No one has so far claimed responsibility for the attack. Another report says that an overnight rocket attack by insurgents killed a worker of Afghanistan Independent Election Commission (AIEC) and wounded another in Jawzjan province. Regional IEC head, Amanullah Habibi has confirmed the incident.

Pajhwok Afghan News Agency reported that 10 people were arrested on Wednesday on charges of distributing night letters in Paktia province. Police Chief Brigadier General Aziz Ahmad Wardak said four people were arrested in Ahmadabad district and six others were arrested in Gardez, where they were spreading the night letters, which said "the election is an American project and people should not participate in it, otherwise they will be targeted by the Taliban." Wardak said some explosives were also seized from the detainees. Meanwhile, Taliban attacked a border police check-post from across the border in Patan district. A police official, Mirza Gull Abakhel, said that two policemen were seriously injured in the 90-minute clash, and one later died in a hospital in Samkani district.

Tolo TV showed a new video clip in which Gulbudin Hikmatyar, the leader of Hizb-e Islami, sets conditions for bringing an end to the war in Afghanistan: the unconditional withdrawal of international troops; establishment of a provisional government; holding of free and transparent elections.

Radio Salam Watandar reported that an IED hit a vehicle in Maqor district of Badghis province, killing 13 civilians and wounding six others, including women and children. Provincial spokesperson Abdul Ghani Saber confirmed the incident; no one has claimed

responsibility.

Afghan media outlets reported five family members were killed when a roadside bomb struck their vehicle in the Sra Kala area of Sharana, the capital of Paktika province. According to the reports the family was taking a pregnant woman to the Civil Hospital of Sharana to give birth.

An editorial published by Pajhwok News Agency summarized security and human rights concerns, concerns, the recent candidate withdrawals, and UN Special Representative Kai Eide's and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's statements on the Afghan Elections.

10. (SBU) MESSAGING:

Messaging remains consistent with Afghan Elections Situation Report One. We will review and update as necessary for the next report.

EIKENBERRY